

Judith Theater, Lewistown

Our 2009 Preservation Award for an outstanding historic rehabilitation project goes to the Judith Theater in Lewistown. Duane Ferdinand, Lewistown historic preservation officer is here to accept the award on behalf of the owners.

The historic rehabilitation of the 1914 Judith Theater in Lewistown is the handiwork of owners Elizabeth and Theodore Wright. It is the couple's second Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credit project involving a commercial building in Lewistown. Their work on the Judith Theater benefits Lewistown not only historically --- but also aesthetically, commercially, and culturally.

The theater's Classical design is by Montana architects Link & Haire. It is expressed in terra cotta and brick and is a fine example of Lewistown's masonry tradition. At the onset of the project the Wrights were fortunate to find the historic architectural character of building mostly intact, but were immediately faced with the unglamorous duty of replacing all heating, electrical and plumbing systems just to make the building function at a basic level.

The twelve-month rehabilitation project exceeded a half-million dollars. The Wright's investment of time and money successfully brought the building's commercial, residential and theater spaces up to current codes. Most prominently, it also restored the modified façade and lobby to their former glory while adding a second screening room in the auditorium's backstage area.

The rehabilitation of the Judith Theater is an excellent example of what we believe a sensitive rehabilitation should include: a continuation of the building's historic functions, preservation of its character, and modifications that are as much in line with the building's architecture as they are with modern circumstances. These ideals only become reality through dedicated building stewards such as Theodore and Elizabeth Wright. It is with great appreciation that we present this award to them for their preservation of Lewistown's Judith Theater.